

The Undertow by Ceose

Series: [The Soulmates of Hawkins \[1\]](#)

Category: Stranger Things (TV 2016)

Genre: Gen, M/M

Language: English

Characters: Billy Hargrove, Billy Hargrove's Mother, Maxine "Max" Mayfield, Neil Hargrove, Steve Harrington, Susan Hargrove

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Summary:

Billy is born with his mark.

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Author's Note:

I'm going with the thought that Billy's dad was in the military and in this universe the soul mark is something that's important to the person at the time you meet them. So if you meet your soul mate at 2 it might be a Paw Patrol character, but if you meet them at 21 it might be a beer bottle. I'm also playing fast and loose with all sorts of stuff here, as always really, but the mark won't mean anything to you because the reference is for your soulmate. I hope that clears things up but I feel like it doesn't.

This is not a happy ending. It's more hopeful I guess. I tried to write something happy and this is what happened. I would say sorry but I've come to the conclusion that this is all I am. Mostly an insane amount of comma use though. Which I am sorry for. Feel free to point out any mistakes or anything that needs to be tweaked into clarity. And thank you for reading.

Billy is born with his mark. A baseball bat that looks like it was caught mid swing. He's so little and the edges are blurred but his parents can tell that once he's grown it'll take up the entire calf. His mom has the words 'Semper Fidelis' on her neck. It flows down from the bottom of her ear to the top of her throat, a twisting vine of what looks like ownership now. Sometimes Billy thinks she made a mistake, that she found the wrong guy in the bar. Maybe if she had waited a few days to go out with her friends he'd be a different kid in a different family. He asks her one day how she knew, she just told him he'd have to see for himself.

What is it, he wonders, that gives people like his dad a soul mate. His mom tells him that before the war, before he was born even, his dad was different. His mom tells him lots of things he never believes. Not when his dad is in the house. He just can't see how he could have been anything other than the man he is now.

He sees his dad's mark one time; a wave high up on his shoulder. Cresting up and down his back. That's his mom, he thinks. Pulling you down into her body and you think it's going to be a warm caress but it's really a harsh yank into not being able to breathe in. Or maybe it's her curled around him in the bed while he cries because it hurts so much after his dad finds out that the bat on his leg has nails in it. He screams at Billy, "*Of course*, the bat has nails in it. You're a delinquent and your soulmate has to be the same fucking way. No good, waste of space that'll be in prison before you're twenty one. You'll probably meet him in prison." The scar on his eyebrow a constant reminder that he's no good. Billy tells himself that he doesn't care, not really. There's nothing he can do to make his dad happy so he stops trying. He lays in bed at night and listens to his mom and dad yell at each other and it's always about him. He thinks about the wave on his dad's back, the colors of the ocean matching the color of his mom's eyes, his eyes, and he thinks that his dad must hate the ocean.

When his mom dies he just gives up. He stops wondering what mark he's left on his soulmate out in the world. What is he going to care about when they finally find each other? He spends the summer after his mom dies wondering if he'll ever feel anything other than this gaping hole of anger and fear. He spends weeks on the beach and thinks he can see why her mark was that big cresting wave. He watches the surfers all day and he thinks about his mom pulling him into and under her at night when his dad had raged around them. He thinks about the scars she left on him and the scars his dad left on her and he knows that he could never be loved like she had loved him. Like the ocean loves; sometimes soft and giving, other times harsh and relentless, but always *always* there. Until, one day, she's gone and he's left adrift in the middle of a deceptive calm.

Then Maxine and Susan happen and the move is this crazy blur that he doesn't really remember, doesn't *want* to remember and when he finally blinks back into reality Max has found her soulmate. Max has found her soulmate in this backwoods town full of nothing and Billy laughs until he throws up outside in the bushes because he can't think of anything funnier in his life. Billy has never seen her soulmark, he doesn't know what it is or where it is but he knows that he hates her for finding something he's pretty convinced he'll never

have. He lays on his bed at night and wonders what the mark he's left on someone is. He thinks maybe his car, his necklace. He wonders how his anger will be drawn on someone else and wonders if his mark is what his soulmates fear looks like. Is this bat for protection? Is it for a fight? He listens to his dad and Susan in the living room trying to fake it when they've both lost parts of their souls and wonders why they even try. Billy drives down the streets in this godforsaken town and wonders so many things. He doubts he'll ever even find out the answer.

Billy starts school and checks all the boxes for popularity so he sits with the cool kids at lunch, goes to all the parties, and hears so much talk about the last guy who sat in his seat that he eventually gets curious about everything. Tommy tells him so much shit, the guy never shuts his mouth really, and Billy thinks he and this Steve guy would have been great friends before. Not just before for Steve but also in the before of Billy. The Billy that rode on his mom's cresting wave of everything hiding from his dad.

He finally meets Steve and it's a burning in his chest, a fire all over him, and he has no idea why. He chokes with it. He listens to the rumors, how Steve and Nancy have made it a year and no one knows why. In this small town of nowhere everyone knows everyone and Steve is not Nancy's soulmate. He walks around the Halloween party and watches Steve and Nancy from the corners of the room. He wonders what Steve is marked with, who Steve is marked by, if it's not his girlfriend.

Billy watches them go into the bathroom and he follows them, pretends to be waiting his turn so he hears Nancy tell Steve he's bullshit, that she doesn't love him. Mostly he hears Steve's voice when he asks her again what she means. "Like we're in love," that little catch in his voice. Billy stands outside the door and burns inside because he already feels like he's fallen into a pit of nothing but a guy he doesn't even know. He thinks back to his mom's face when he asked her how he would know. The look on her face when she told him he just would, is this what that look meant? Is this what a bat full of nails means. He thinks so, he hopes so; he fists his hands by his side and makes himself walk away. He can't open a door he has no intention of stepping through. No matter how much he wants to, no

matter how much he burns up walking away.

Billy has always been full of fire. As a child his tantrums were rage filled lashing out, his face would burn red hot and his head would be full of smoke. His mom told him he was his father's son; that they have the same rage inside and he hated hearing it. She called him her little spitfire, her golden boy. He had reddish blonde curls she called his halo before they grew out. He was her made over with his dad's temper and she loved him more than anything. He thinks maybe his mom's face is imprinted on his soulmates skin. The only thing he's felt like he's ever loved was a woman that died and left him alone instead of staying with him and fighting her way out. Probably not though, some days he hates her for dying more than he ever loved her.

He goes to basketball practice the day after the party and Steve is there. Billy feels his skin heat up, his blood speed up. He has to touch him, he needs to be near him. He hates Steve for making him feel this way, even though the other boy doesn't even really know who he is. He wraps his leg up so no one can see the bat that takes up the whole of his calf. Steve refuses to take his shirt off and Billy thinks, that's where it is. That's where someone has been drawn across his skin. Billy doesn't even know who it might be and he already hates them for taking Steve away. Steve isn't even his and he burns with it. They go to the showers and Steve's back is free of marks, a blank smooth canvass and Billy's breath catches in his throat because he thought for sure he'd see himself across it. All he can do is tell him some bullshit about bitches and then leave. He can't get a breath in, he can't see, he can't do anything but leave.

It makes sense though, the more he thinks about it. Why would anyone be his soulmate? This terrible boy, this hateful thing. His dad had told him, over and over, how terrible he is, how worthless. His dad told him the day of his mom's funeral that she died to get away from him, so this makes sense. In the dark of night, when the moon isn't even offering a little light for him to see, it makes complete sense that he's not good enough to have a soulmate. That he would love someone and never be loved back. Maybe the bat is his soulmates hatred of him. Maybe the bat is how he dies. He thinks he

probably deserves worse.

He asks Tommy at lunch the next day about Steve's soulmark. Tommy says he's never seen it, no one has. That maybe Steve is one of the few that don't actually have one. It's rare, and out here it's almost freakish but it could happen. Steve with no mark and Billy with a possible murder weapon. He thinks that maybe he's just that unlucky. To feel this burning for a boy that could never return it. Maybe his mom could tell that this is what he was meant for and his dad was right. That he was the reason she took all those pills, that she never really loved him because he's not worth anything at all.

Billy roams the halls of the high school, he roams the streets of the town and he thinks about the ocean back in California with it's waves never ending. He thinks about his mom with his dad's mark around her neck like a chokehold. He thinks about the mark on his leg like a brand. Mostly he thinks about Steve Harrington and his lack of a mark. He thinks about how he's going to burn up in this town missing something he can never have. Then one night his dad sends him out to look for Max and when he finds her, of course, there she is with the one person in town that catches Billy on fire.

He can remember walking into the house, he can remember all the kids yelling. He can remember the way Steve's face had looked when the plate hit him. After that though it's a red haze blacked out and when he wakes up the spot where Max had stabbed him is burning and his car is gone. He doesn't know what happened, he doesn't know what he did, but he remembers the bat. He wants to ask where she got it, who does it belong to. He thinks it's Steve's, he hopes to all the holy gods that it's Steve's.

Steve misses a week of school and when he comes back there's a bandage on his head and everyone talks about how he had to have stitches and they shaved his head for it. The bandage masking what's sure to end up an ugly scar. No one knows what really happened to him, the rumors are all ridiculous and Billy stands down the hall from Steve and watches him talk to Nancy and Jonathan and burns up inside because he did that. He put that spot on his head and maybe that's all he'll ever leave on someone.

Eventually Steve comes to school and the bandage is gone. Billy walks into school and all he can hear is excited murmuring. He finds

Tommy at his locker and asks him what's going on. Tommy and his big mouth more than happy to tell Billy that apparently Steve *did* have a soul mark, hidden under all that hair. A soul mark that now has ten stitches running through it.

Billy stalks the halls all day trying to get a glimpse of Steve and his newly uncovered mark. Part of him ecstatic that Steve is marked and even if it's not Billy he's still a part of it somehow because he put that scar there himself. Not some unknown person Billy already hates. The other part of him sick because there's no chance it's him. There's no chance he even deserves someone, much less someone that he beat almost to death.

He finds Steve at the end of the day in the locker room. The side of his head shaved and clear as day the words 'pretty boy' in Billy's hand writing barely showing through hair trying to regrow and with stitches cutting the word boy into parts of itself. Billy can't breathe in or out. He can't do anything but stare. He thinks it makes sense that it's there, hidden in Steve's hair. He thinks of his mom's face lying in her coffin and he thinks of Steve's face when the plate hit him. He thinks about so many things but mostly he thinks that it makes sense he hates Steve's soulmate. He hates himself so much he doesn't deserve a soulmate. Steve doesn't deserve someone that's only going to hurt him.

Billy leaves the locker room, he leaves the school. He gets in his car and he thinks about his mom and Steve and he wonders why he didn't do the smart thing and take the pills his mom left sitting out on her dresser that night. Why he didn't let her pull him underneath her cresting wave and fall into that deep dark undertow that she was. He wonders where he should go until he sits there so long Steve is sliding into the passenger seat next to him. His head turned so that when Billy looks at him all he sees is proof that the only thing he cares about right now in this moment is Steve. He knows he should say sorry, or show him the bat, or just do something other than stare but he can't move. He can't think. He wants to touch the mark, he wants to touch Steve, he wants to start over, he wants so many things. He reaches over and slides his fingers under his mark and into Steve's hair. He thinks maybe now he can have something other than this burning inside. Maybe now he can get out from under his

mother's memory, his father's hate. Maybe now he can be something more, now he can be the bat in Steve's hand when he's fighting whatever monsters he needs it for. Billy looks in Steve's eyes and he can breath again.